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ABSTRACT

The author examines physical education as a discipline and discusses what it is that physical educators can offer their students to make the instruction relevant to their educational careers and their lives. The intensive (but isolated) treatment of particular sports offered in popular sport-book literature is contrasted with the possibilities of integrating psychological, affective, and cognitive aspects of physical activity in a program integrated into other curricular activities. It is urged that physical educators interweave into their instruction spiritual, moral, social, and historical aspects of enrichment along with physical well-being and skill, so that students bring their total being to the encounter and emerge affected in all respects. (MJB)

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THE NEW SPIRIT IN INSTRUCTION: COHESION, COMMUNICATION AND CAUSATION

Paper Presented at the Mid-America College and University Physical Education Conference: The General Program
Chicago, Illinois, January 1978

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As part of the research I have done for this paper I read the titles of sport books available at my local book store. On the shelves I found, The Complete Beginners Guide to Golf, How to Teach Yourself and Family to Swim Well, Quick Tennis, Instant Tennis, Ski in Six Days, and many other similar ones. With these books available why would anyone want to seek a teacher? Why should anyone spend time and tuition money to take 20 or 30 hours of instruction, when for $5.00, an hour or two of reading, and then practicing when the spirit moves one, one can learn everything one needs to know? What should be our unique contribution to the college education of the student that would be worthy of college credit? What dimension can we add to the instruction? What commodity do we have to sell? How should physical educators differ in the instruction they give from the sport pros or the "how to do it" sport authors?

I see it in three words: cohesion, communication, and causation. Cohesion of our knowledge with the commodity being our discipline; communication of our knowledge into meaningful discourse with the recipients of our instruction and causation of improved total well being.

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At one point in history, James A. Garfield could say, "A pine bench, with Mark Hopkins at one end of it and me at the other, is enough college for me." Was it what Mark Hopkins was saying or how he said it and how he involved the student that made him a remembered teacher? It is difficult to separate content from instructional process. But often one's receptivity to content is dependent upon how much satisfaction is gained while learning it.

Learning is supposed to alter behavior. Often the behavior we seek to alter is the visable motor action. We seek to groove a movement pattern for a specific utility. This pattern may be felt in isolation of all other patterns or may be interrelated with others. But if our teaching ends here we have only altered one aspect of the human being's multifaceted self, hence, limited his satisfaction and undersold our discipline.

Who are the Mark Hopkinses of the physical education world? How many physical educators are remembered by the non-majors as being bigger than life; capable of inspiring mind and body to transcend the mediocre mire of superficial education? Hopefully many do. But to others to be so may not have even occurred to them and to others the magnitude of the aspiration seems too great to even seek. Yet, it shouldn't be an impossible task or aspiration.

Often these remembered giants have been in liberal arts and sciences. Their success comes when they liberate the students' minds from the restraints of the narrow thinking developed by subject provincialism and lack of identification with mind activity. As the students come to under-

stand the process of inductive and deductive reasoning, and the components of the discipline they find they are capable of generating new thoughts for themselves. As such they get a glimpse into the expanded horizons that they can now explore and therefore, feel bigger than before, hence, more fulfilled. They can then become aware of the whole world of the discipline. This is what a liberal education should do. To the physical educator this liberal education would include body as well as mind liberation.

We talk of learning the process of learning how to learn as being more fulfilling than merely stacking up facts or actions to be memorized, imitated and repeated on cue. When only the latter is done we have engaged in uni-dimensional teaching affecting only one dimension of the student. Unless a breakthrough that links new meaning and a new found consciousness is felt by the student, we can not expect the student to take the step over the restrictive boundaries of his existing competencies and give serious credence to the instruction.

Helping the student to take the step beyond can be most rewarding to the student when he or she experiences and realizes the interrelatedness of knowledge. That is, the blending of disciplines and experiencing the syntax or orderly arrangement of the governing principles operative in the whole field, with the concomitant aesthetic feelings and the creative possibilities. When this happens the student is then liberated from being other-directed to being self-directed. In this state he has the tools to generate his own learning and knows how to seek additional

stimulation. He can become immersed in and become a part of a larger world. The knowledge becomes truly his.

It is somewhat like the difference between taking a conducted tour of a foreign land versus self exploration of the unknown. I have had the opportunity to experience both. There was a certain security on the conducted tour, but the restriction of being other-directed never really let me break out of my provincial existence. Being ushered en mass like an encapsulated-insulated module of people, manuevered to sites and store selected by the tour company, stumbling over the others to get a glimpse of what I was to see and to move on to accommodate a rigid time table did not allow me to get beyond a superficial awareness of the humaness of the people, their culture or heritage. Only their strangeness was felt along with the impossibleness to get sense and meaning out of it. It was nice to come home where I felt more a part of the environment.

Then I had the occasion to do it alone. Taking the skills already learned; those of map and timetable reading, the rudiments of the languages and a knowledge of history and culture, the trip to the unknown could be planned. A whole different perspective was gained. I was free to touch shoulders and ideas, linger when the occasion was interesting and move on when I was ready. Even getting lost was an enriching experience because it became the teachable moment. I knew what I didn't know and felt a compelling need to find out. I became part of the environment and the trip was my own.

And so it may be with instruction. Are we taking the students on conducted idea and body awareness tours, chauffering them to historic and new sites, but not letting them enjoy, touch or interact with what they see and feel? Are we removing the teachable moments when they feel the need to ask why and to seek what is beyond? Or are we making available the tools they need, be it cognitive, affective or psychomotor so they can fully understand and feel a part of the larger world of human movement, knowledge and existance? Are we giving them a liberal education that can truly alter their behavior in a multi-dimensional and complete way? If not, they may as well buy the "how to do it" books and not waste money on us.

Therefore, I believe our instruction should be constructed so the students learn not only the specific activity, but also the process of learning motor skills. They should be knowledgeable of the components of how to analyze movement, be able to recognize similarities and differences, to understand the role of proactive and retractive interference, comprehend and practice appropriate training techniques and psychological conditioning, how to fix the appropriate motor patterns, to be sensitive to and use feedback and to evaluate their achievement. Just as we learned the process of mathematical computation so new and different mathematical problems could be solved at will, so should the student know the basic process and underlying principles of solving movement problems. We teach this covertly and overtly. We should

examine our instructional process to be certain that is is congruent with the tenents of motor learning and exercise physiology. Further, the student's attention should overtly be called to the various components of the process.

Are we teaching a sport or a discipline? A discipline has been characterized by Nixon [1] as having an identifiable domain dealing with significant themes and possessing a central core of interest with stated goals. It has a history and recognized tradition, utilizes unique conceptual and syntactical structure organized by a body of basic concepts. It utilizes intellectual, conceptual, technical and mechanical tools. Its basic set of procedures lead to ways of learning and knowing in the domain of the discipline. It relies on accurate language to provide precise, careful communication both within its ranks and to outsiders.

Physical education has matured and now has developed the necessary knowledge to be a discipline. And yet, in practice we have finitely compartmentalized our curriculum and separated each unit from another by teaching each unit as if previous movement encounter never occurred or that other aspects of our discipline do not exist. To often the linking disciplinary elements of commonality are not made from one unit to another or from one discipline to another.

All sport skills are governed by the laws of physics. The application of technique from one skill to another may be specific or unique, but the underlying principles are similar. Inherent are also the psychological elements of fear, acceptance, and the need for achievement and affiliation. The degree to which the pyschological environment of the sport is threatening or supportive to physical and social well being

may differ from one to another. But the psychological and sociological principles are the same which are existing in other endeavors. The aesthetic dimensions are present be it dance, basketball, yoga, art or music. Each sport takes its place in the historical and social foundation of human endeavor. Manipulating the learning environment so the student can feel the wholeness of the experience can present sport or dance as another medium by which the so called cognate subjects can be experienced and the human self can be enriched in all dimensions. Conversely, the cognative and aesthetic subjects can enrich sport and dance and physical well being. Sport is not a part from mind and aesthetic disciplines. It is a part of the whole world of interrelated knowing and doing. As such this breadth should be part of our instruction.

We now see this new spirit coming into being. The conceptual approach to curriculum and instruction has reached the textbook level. The taxonomies of cognitive, affective and motor domains have permeated our literature and hopefully are being incorporated into our lessons. Each of these can give syntax and coehesiveness to the instructional content.

We have technical and media assistance available in cinematography, computerized treadmills, video tape replay, computerized instructional terminals and the like. We have instructional management systems such as personalized learning, individualized instruction, cybernetic systems, behavioral cueing processes, humanistic approaches and mastery learning.

We have learned about the human beings we are instructing. We find they are not clones stamped from the same mold. Each enters our classes with his or her own unique style of learning, interests, goals and achievements. Our methodology can accommodate these individualities only so long as we are capable of differentiating the learning environments so the student can experience a fit between a learning program and his or her learning needs.

Thus, we have these content, structural and technical or craft options available to the teacher. These are real, touchable instruments or systems. You can walk into the gymnasium and readily see their presence or absence.

But the less tangible or visable ingredient in the instructional process is, perhaps, the most important. That is, what has occurred within the teacher in order to bring a meaningful complete learning environment to the student. How complete or integrated, how up to date, how relevant is the knowledge resting within the teacher? Just by looking at us no one can tell how much growth we have made. It would be easy to tell if we grew a bump on our head for each year we read research, explored new ideas in other disciplines to make the transfer to our own, did instructional research and made successful application to our students. It would be easy for the student then to separate the smooth heads from the bumpy before instruction began, rather than after the instruction.

In our eagerness to become a discipline we have divided up the task of discovering the knowledge. Because of the complexity of the knowledge explosion none of us can participate first hand in all the fields of research and application. So we have compartmentalized the researcher from the practitioner. Even further we have specialized the researcher into physiology of exercise, history, philosophy, sociology, motor learning, instructional methodology and so on. Then even more minutely into basic researchers and applied researchers within each specialization. The practitioner is separated first into team, individual, dance, aquatics or gymnastics. Now they are even more specialized into the individual activities within these areas. We have become technically competent to define and interact within a small segment of a dynamic and comprehensive discipline. Have we become the craftsmen which the sport pros and the "how to do it" authors are capable of? Are we truly a scholar of our discipline if we are locked into one small aspect of it? Are we truly a college teacher worthy of rank if we convey only one small aspect of our discipline?

Mostly what the students see of our discipline is the small part; the mosaic chip that they elect to take. This small chip may be enjoyable in itself, but shouldn't we take a step beyond and let these chips augment and enrich each other in a total mosaic of the liberal arts and science of human movement? The general education student may elect but one or two courses. We can not assume he will sample from each area

within the discipline to experience its wholeness. Thus, perhaps, we should interweave wholeness into whatever special sport we teach and communicate it to the student.

To prepare for this communication we need to communicate with each other. How does the basic research get communicated into applied research and into the practical application to the student and visa versa. How does the philosophical, sociological, historical, psychomotor and physiological research get put together into a unified whole, transmitable at all levels of human movement instruction other than by communication?

Most universities support their laboratories a part from the instructional environment in the gymnasium. Rarely are the tools and products of research labs visable to the general students and rarely are they the benefactors of the new knowledge. How often or meaningfully do the researchers, theory teachers and practitioners communicate their needs and mutually seek solutions? The new spirit of instruction yearns for this communication for we must bring the students into communion with the discipline or why bother with having a discipline?

We have seen an increasing interest in yoga and the martial arts. At one time we considered these activities outside of school physical education. But the students began to seek them. We need to see why. Perhaps it is because they are complete activities providing involvement with the student's desire for spiritual, moral, social, and historical

enrichment along with physical well-being and skill. Interwoven in their content is self-discipline and aesthetic appreciation giving wholeness to the experience. The student brings his total being to the encounter and all of him is touched. Why not so with our other sports?

Now I need not remind you that a new group of "how to do it" authors are cranking out the books. In addition, books such as Mitchner's Sport in America, Leonard's The Ultimate Athlete and others have moved up the best seller list. These books deal with the philosophy of the "why of sport and physical well-being." To what extent are we, the practitioners, capable of interacting with what has become almost overnight a phenomenon of change initiated by the lay authors?

The advent of Inner Skiing or Inner Tennis has given rise to a group of Inner Game theorists who have approached movement instruction from a psychological framework. Each of these theorist believe they have the answer to why some have trouble learning. To them the focus has been too much on the cognitive or technical direction of the mind. Success they say comes when we release the unconscious to make the body-muscle sense more receptive to the feedback. It is not the lack of technical comprehension, they claim, but our emotions, doubts and fears that inhibit our doing.

Loudis and Lobitz's book, Skiing from the Head Down, places the magic of learning in the fact that we have a brain. They refute that

the body can automatically come forth with the proper response without disengaging the cognitive psychological hang-ups with relaxation techniques. The Hidden Skier by Fowler and Smith follows the theme of positive thinking. They claim that even your own casual comments said in jest which demean your ability can trigger the self-fulfilling prophecy syndrome.

Whether any or all of these thoughts are valid, whether we need to suppress Self I and Fear I and develop Self II and Fear II or whether the state of relaxation comes before or after a skill is learned, are thoughts worth exploring. But the important thing is that these ideas have been communicated in a wholistic way to the potential sport participant. I'm not sure that we haven't invented these thoughts, perhaps called by other names like mental practice, "doing what comes naturally," cueing behavior and so on. We tell students to relax when we notice elements of tension inhibiting performance. But it is only recently that we admitted relaxation classes into our curriculum and we have yet to make the transfer of its utility to basketball, aquatics and so on.

Within the game theory books is detected a philosophical shift. They deal with more than grooving a movement skill. In an interview with W. Timothy Gallwey by Grace Lichtenstein (2) reported in Psychology Today, Gallwey said, he ". . . wrote The Inner Game of Tennis for people who felt that how they play tennis was very important to their sense of self-worth. This is a fundamental myth of our culture. It makes the

process of achievement very painful, and difficult to attain." He admits "I have to constantly fight ego responses....the joy must come from the doing, not the having done." He believes Americans have traditionally been "tremendously over-oriented toward results, but he now sees the pendulum swinging the other way, from achievement we can have awareness." In my mind it is more the degree of achievement and the standard we impose to judge achievement that makes the difference. I am lead to speculate, however, as to how many students do not elect our courses because self-worth has been culturally tied to how well they approximate the professional's achievement. I do believe that he is right that the learning process should be joyful.

The other current influence on instruction has also come from another source. The role of brain hemisphericity in learning has begun to permeate educational literature. To the hemispherists the magic of learning comes from providing the correct input to stimulate the appropriate brain center for action. The question of why some so easily learn through visualization and others through the written word has been answered by researching the functions of the hemispheres of the brain. As we have long recognized and accommodated right and left handedness we must now recognize right or left brainedness. Each has its own brand of thinking and doing. Instructional processes which use singular delivery systems may increase the capacity of some students who have pre-disposition for that mode while leaving others in a remedial state. But the absence of a balance in the use of each brain handicaps all learners. Findings are beginning to show that most instruction uses

a left brain input of reading and listening and out put of talking and writing. Thus, the right brain or visual-spacial hemisphere is ignored. It may be counterproductive to teach right brain visual-spacial movements skills through left-brain modes.

So in summary, I believe it is our discipline that makes our instruction worthy of college credit. It is the opportunity for the student to learn how to learn movement skills; it is the interweaving of the appropriate principles of sport psychology, sociology, history, ethics and aesthetics into the specific courses that will give meaning and breadth to the altered behavior of our students.

We, as the teachers, must know our discipline in substance and craft. We must be capable of making decisions as to how to change process and content when symptoms of mislearning occurs. We must know the contribution of each component of the methodological systems and when to select each to meet the students' needs for affiliation, self-exploration and achievement. We must be whole in ourselves. For the most part it is the general education sport and dance teacher who is the window of our discipline to the outside world. It is their teaching that communicates our existence in the world of knowledge.

Now the new spirit calls for us to learn how to stimulate the affective and aesthetic self and to explore delivery systems which will conduct the input to efficient and effective output. What adjustments are needed to strengthen the ego through the trial and learning period to

make the process of learning as enjoyable as using the finished skill? What is the role of mastery learning, affecting the affective, competency-based instruction, individualized instruction, formative and summative evaluation and grading, television and computer assisted instruction, contracting, group and traditional instruction and the learning laboratory concept of instruction in helping the student to find new horizons in movement endeavors?

These sessions that follow in the instructional strands are selected to help in this process. It is for each of us to put our instruction and discipline into a cohesiveness that can be communicated to cause a total growth respecting the student's total being. We have much to offer our general education students. They should not be tempted to replace us with a book.

Footnotes

1. Nixon, John. "The Criteria of a Discipline" Quest December 1967. p. 47.
2. Lichtenstein, Grace. "The Inner Gamesman" Psychology Today. November, 1972, p. 91.

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